

Shall the People Rule?

The failure of the Senate to ratify the treaty and make the United States a member of the League of Nations raises a number of very important issues—issues much more important than the determining of party responsibility for the defeat. While an effort will be made by party leaders on each side to throw the blame for the defeat upon the opposite party, these efforts can not divert attention from the far-reaching questions presented for discussion—questions of such a vital character and of such absorbing interest that the voters will resent any attempt to make the decision depend upon the party considerations. Party considerations, while decisive in ordinary times and on ordinary subjects, not only lose their force in the presence of national crises but are precluded by the very nature of the contest. No one can stoop to partisan arguments when the nation is in peril and the welfare of the world at stake.

The defeat of the ratifying resolution threatens a postponement of the serious consideration of pressing domestic problems. There are many readjustments made necessary by the war; questions matured in the heat of the conflict are now ripe for action. Those who are especially interested in these questions will protest with increasing earnestness against the ignoring of domestic subjects of special interest to large classes and of general interest to the whole public.

For instance, the extortions of the profiteers are being better and better understood and the impudence of those who, for their own selfish ends, attempt to strangle legislation and to obstruct remedial measures arouses increasing indignation. The bread-winner confronts a drain upon his family income which he can not ignore, or even consider with patience, and now that woman, the financial manager of the family, is to be given the ballot, we may expect a very critical and comprehensive examination into the subject. The profiteers may be willing to turn attention from themselves to the phraseology of reservations but their victims, much more numerous than the beneficiaries, will not be willing to change the subject. The attempt to make a party issue of the treaty reservations will therefore be irritating rather than successful.

It will be difficult to persuade the laboring man that his interests should be made subordinate to an academic discussion, indefinitely prolonged, as to the language in which to frame a contingent proposition—A PROPOSITION THAT BECOMES IMPORTANT ONLY ON THE HAPPENING OF THAT WHICH MAY NEVER HAPPEN. It must be remembered that the reservations deal almost entirely with things that are speculative and improbable rather than certain or even probable. The laboring man, increasingly conscious of the dignity of his toil and of the importance of the part he plays in our industrial and political system, is not in a humor to view with complacency the effort to shunt him to one side. He did his part in the war and will claim his place in the nation's plans and his share in the shaping of the country's destiny.

The beneficiaries of private monopoly are banding themselves together for a concerted attack upon the people's right to administer, through their own agents and for their own benefit, the so-called natural monopolies—the enterprises in which competition, by the very nature of the case, is impossible. These men may be willing, even anxious, to keep the people engaged in fruitless discussion over matters difficult to decide while they still further entrench themselves, but the victims of the extortion inseparable from monopoly will be neither deceived nor diverted from the defense of their rights.

But the defeat of the treaty makes the nation incompetent to perform its duty to the world as well as powerless to safeguard the rights of its own citizens. The world is threatened with chaos. Democracy is not as strong in Europe today as it was when the signing of the armistice ushered in the world's greatest thanksgiving day. Besides the natural reaction that is always to be expected after any great forward movement, the friends of democracy have been humiliated by the attitude of our government. A number of nations accepted the democratic idea of government at the estimate that we placed

upon it and started out in good faith to follow our example. They have had a desperate struggle. Monarchy has surged back on one side, on the other side, bolshevism has threatened the very existence of law and order. These Republics have needed a friend and counsellor—a disinterested nation that could hear sympathetically and advise wisely—but our nation has been for the time being powerless to render the assistance deserved and so badly needed. While other governments, less domestic than ours, have been able to agree to terms of peace and formally bring the war to an end, we have spent the time in fruitless debate.

A League of Nations is conceded to be impossible without the active presence and positive influence of our nation. The United States can make the League of Nations a real forum for the settling of international disputes; without our nation's participation, the League is but an enlargement of the old balance of power arrangement. The Allies and their enemies are gradually drifting toward war; each day furnishes new evidence of the inability of the parties now in the league to reach a peaceful settlement of existing differences or to construct a satisfactory machine for the prevention of recourse to force. Fear on the one side—fear that they will not be able to hold that already secured—and, on the other side, resentment for that which has been granted under compulsion—these two disintegrating forces menace the permanence of the truce that has been declared.

Those—whoever they may be—who are responsible for the defeat of the treaty and the postponement of our nation's entrance into the League of Nations, have sorely afflicted our nation and grievously disappointed the hopes of the world.

But the failure of the Senate to ratify has raised even a more fundamental issue than those already stated. If those in control of the government compel a postponement of the consideration of domestic issues, they know that their sins, though enormous, will not destroy the Republic, however great the penalty, individual and national, paid for postponement. And the same may be said as to the loss that may come to the world outside because of our withholding of a helping hand. The physical and financial exhaustion resulting from the recent war may postpone, for a little while at least, a renewal of strife, however much the bitterness may increase.

But how shall we answer to the world for our palpable surrender of the fundamental principle of democracy which we have preached to the world? How shall we explain our apostasy from the faith which we have professed? We have invested more than a hundred thousand precious lives in the effort to "make the world safe for democracy;" we have expended some thirty billions of dollars to establish the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. And the one outstanding principle of democracy is THE RIGHT OF THE MAJORITY TO RULE. What will the world think of us—what will we think of ourselves—if we permit a minority of the Senate to usurp the right to decide the nation's policy?

The vote in favor of ratification, with the reservations agreed upon, stood 49 to 35. This is more than half of ninety-eight, the total membership of the Senate without counting the eight paired in favor of ratification. Counting votes and pairs, the Senate stood 57 (49 voting and eight paired) for to 39 (35 voting and four paired) against—18 MAJORITY FOR RATIFICATION.

The constitution makes a two-thirds vote necessary for the ratification of a treaty, but this constitutional provision was written one hundred and thirty years ago and at a time when the sentiment of the world was not as strong in favor of peace as it is now. That constitutional requirement has obstructed the path toward peace and enabled a minority of the Senate to defeat the will of the majority. The effect of the provision is to permit the minority to suspend action indefinitely or until an appeal can be taken to the people, but such a course is in effect a filibuster against the majority—a filibuster at a time when the nation can not consent to it

without doing irreparable injury to the basic theory of popular government.

Is it not time for the people, employing the constitutional methods provided in the organic law itself, to so change the constitution as to make the document harmonize with democratic principles and the needs of today? Is it not time for an amendment that will permit the majority to ratify? It might be a majority of the Senate, if it is desired to continue the Senate's monopoly of treaty matters. But as treaties often involve a declaration of the nation's policy and generally involve the expenditure of money, it may be better to deposit the ratifying power in Congress rather than in either branch. A majority can declare war; why not allow a majority to conclude peace? Why not make it as easy to end a war as to begin it—as easy to come out of it as to go into it?

At this time, when the world is looking on and anxiously awaiting our action, we are in a position to fire another shot that will be "heard around the world." We can impress other nations, as we can hardly impress them in any other way, by making our constitution conform to the theory toward which the world is marching. We appeal to all nations to recognize the people as the source of power and to trust them with the arbitrament of all questions that concern them. Now let us give them an outstanding illustration of our own faith in the principle by applying it to Congress. We can thus extricate ourselves from an embarrassing situation; protect ourselves from such a condition of helplessness in the future; relieve the world of suspense and, at the same time, more firmly establish the great governmental doctrines for which we stand sponsor.

If this Congress will immediately submit such an amendment, there is little doubt but that the two conventions will endorse it and that will not only insure its ratification within a year, but the certainty of an early ratification will in all probability persuade the present Senate to anticipate ratification by putting the plan into operation immediately after the conventions by permitting the majority as recorded, to become the two-thirds majority required by the constitution. Eleven of those voting in the negative can do this by withholding their votes out of deference to the rights of the majority.

Let the people rule. There is no alternative to democracy except the adoption of a policy which gives the presumption of right to the minority, and that is antagonistic to our entire theory of government. W. J. BRYAN.

"ARTIFICIAL" CRIME

A Republican newspaper of Indiana defends Senator Newberry on the ground that the crime for which he was convicted was an "ARTIFICIAL" crime. Are not all crimes against the ballot "artificial" in the same sense? As a matter of fact, Senator Newberry's crime was a much graver offense than burglary, because it was a crime against the whole state. Let them try to repeal the law and they will learn what the plain people think about such crimes.

PROHIBITION A SUCCESS

With Bird S. Coler, Commissioner of Charities of New York, converted to prohibition by what he has seen in that state (see his testimony on other page); with Jane Addams converted to prohibition by what she has seen in Chicago (see interview on another page); and with Omaha converted to prohibition by experience, Senator Hitchcock must feel a little lonesome, but he still cries for wine and beer.

WORSE THAN A CRIME

With Europe drifting back toward war it is more than a crime for partisans to talk of making the treaty an issue in the campaign. The treaty should be ratified at once with the reservations agreed upon so that our nation can turn its attention to pressing domestic problems and save the old world from another war. Shame upon any man who would drag the treaty into politics at a time like this.

JOHNSON'S VOTE A WARNING

Johnson's vote in Michigan ought to be a warning to any Democrat who thinks that our party can profit by making an issue of the treaty reservations. We risk losing all if we quibble over reservations.